



THE POWER OF PRAYER SERIES (Part 2)

“Prayer: Personal – Purposeful – Practical - Powerful!”

Jesus exemplifies a life of prayer. Our Lord spent entire nights in prayer (Luke 6:12); He would rise early and pray before dawn (Mark 1:35); He would break away from the crowds and spend time in prayer in the wilderness (Luke 5:16); our Savior prayed in His passion at the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:42 -*Your will be done*).

- **Prayer is our communication to God our Father.** Prayer humbles humanity and enables us to handle adversity. Prayer is personal and perpetual. Paul the apostle exhorts us to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thess. 5:17).

- **Prayer builds our faith, bonds our worship, battles the enemy, and brings us peace!** (Philippians 4:6-7 -*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*)

~ FIVE PREPS TO A POWERFUL PRAYER LIFE: **(PREP speaks of a preparation of our hearts before we pray.)**

> PREP #1 - PRAYER IS PERSONAL (v5-6)

(v5) **Pray!** – Notice that Jesus says, “*when you pray*” not “*if you pray.*” The Pharisees would pray at 9am, noon, and 3pm and they loved to be seen and heard during their times of prayer. Today some folks like to impress others when they pray by changing their voice with a vibrato, or they deepen it to sound austere. While others involved in self-glory will pray real loud as if God is deaf this of course makes them sound powerful. Then there are those who like to pray in King James English, presenting one’s self as quite learned.

(v6) **Proper prayers** are personal, from the heart, sincere, between the believer and God. The tax collector’s prayer was humble and simple “*God be merciful to me a sinner!*” (Luke 18:13) and Jesus said he went away justified.

- Do you have a secret place to pray? Do you have a list of answered prayers? God rewards you personally.

- Remember what God spoke through **Jeremiah 33:3** - *Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.*’

> PREP #2 - PRAYER IS PURPOSEFUL (v7-8)

(v7) **Jesus teaches us not to use “vain repetitions” in our prayer life** – Repetitious prayers come from **duty**, not **devotion**. The word “*vain*” speaks of **meaningless, thoughtless chatter**.

- **RITUAL vs. REALITY:** Many ritual (*vain repetitious*) prayers involve **Prayer Beads** or **Rosaries**, which are used by members of various religions such as Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Bahá’í Faith to count the repetitions of prayers, chants or devotions. They may also be used for meditation, protection from negative energy, or for relaxation.

- Using “**prayer beads**” as a tool of meditation is as old as written history. It is not a coincidence that prayer beads are present in almost every religion. Prayer beads may have physical, metaphysical and psychological effects on their users. Since the beads are fingered in an automatic manner, they allow the user to keep track of how many prayers have been said with a minimal amount of conscious effort.

- There are three widely accepted uses for Prayer beads:

1. Repetition of the same devotion a set (usually large) number of times. This is the earliest form of prayer beads (the Japa Mala) and the earliest Christian form (the prayer rope). This is also the type in use by the Bahá'í Faith
2. Repetition of several different prayers in some pattern, possibly interspersed with or accompanied by meditations.
3. Meditation on a series of spiritual themes, as in e.g. Islam or Catholicism.
4. Greek Orthodox komboskini of 100 knots.
5. The Desert Fathers of the 3rd to 5th century, used knotted ropes to count prayers, typically the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner"). The invention is attributed to St Anthony or his associate St Pachomius in the 4th century.
6. Catholics and some Anglicans use the The Rosary with 54 + additional 5 beads as prayer beads. The Rosary's name comes from the Latin "rosarium", meaning "rose garden" and is an important and traditional devotion of the Roman Catholic Church, combining prayer and meditation in sequences (called "decades") of an Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, and a Glory Be to the Father, as well as a number of other prayers (such as the Apostle's Creed and the Hail Holy Queen) at the beginning and end. Traditionally, a complete Rosary involved the praying of 15 decades: 5 joyful mysteries, 5 sorrowful mysteries and 5 glorious mysteries; Pope John Paul II added an additional five called the 5 luminous mysteries. **Roman Catholics** light prayer candles in the belief that their requests will continue to ascend repetitiously to God as long as the candle is lit.



- Bible commentator John A. Broadus writes, “Many Buddhists spin wheels containing written prayers, believing that each turn of the wheel sends that prayer to their god.



- In regards to **Muslims** and their prayers Dr. Thomson in his writings "The Land and the Book" explains, "Let us stop and watch the ceremony as it goes on. The Muslim man raises his open hands until the thumbs touch the ears, exclaiming aloud, "Allah-hu-akbar" - 'God is great.' After uttering mentally a few short petitions, the hands are brought down and folded together near the girdle, while he recites the first chapter of the Koran, and two or three other brief passages from the same book. And now he bends forward, rests his hands upon his knees, and repeats three times a formula of praise to 'God most great.'

Then, standing erect, he cries "Allah-hu-akbar," as at the beginning. Then see him drop upon his knees, and bend forward until his nose and forehead touch the ground directly between his expanded hands. This he repeats three times, muttering all the while the same short formulas of prayer and praise. The next move will bring him to his knees, and then, settling back upon his heels, he will mumble over various small petitions, with sundry grunts and exclamations, according to taste and habit. He has now gone through one regular Rek'ah; and, standing up as at the first, and on exactly the same spot, he will perform a second, and even a third, if specially devout, with precisely the same genuflections. They are obliged to repeat some expressions thirty times, others many hundred times."

- Whether one is Buddhist, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, or Christian, the greatest Prophet of all, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, has declared that **"vain repetitions"** are useless before God. **Let there be no misunderstanding all religions do not lead to God for salvation, there's only One who saves, JESUS, who is the CHRIST!** Jesus said in John 14:6 - *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

- **Christians pray through this One according to 1 Timothy 2:5-6 - *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all;***

- **When we pray we must pray in His NAME, John 14:13-14 - *And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.***

(v8) **Our "Father knows"** – There are times when we repeat a request to God this does not constitute a "vain repetition"; for both Jesus and Paul repeated their petitions three times (Matt 26:36-46; 2 Cor 12:7-8). A request becomes a "vain repetition" if it is only a babbling of words without a sincere heart desire to seek and do God's will. The mere reciting of memorized prayers can be vain repetition.

> PREP #3 - PRAYER IS PRACTICAL (v9-13)

- **Jesus gives this prayer as an instructional prayer for His disciples.** Some have called this the **"Lord's Prayer,"** but that prayer is actually found in John chapter 17. This prayer (Mt. 6:9-13) should be called the **"Disciples Prayer."**

- ***Christians should apply the various themes of this prayer to their own prayer life:***

(v9) **"Our"** represents the family of God, **"Father"** is our relationship, **"in heaven"** is location/destination, **"hallowed be thy name"** represents holiness of the One addressed, reverence is implied when we pray.

(v10) **"Your kingdom come"** my kingdom go, **"thy will be done"** submission breeds fruition, **"on earth as it is in heaven"** bring heaven to earth and into our hearts.

(v11) **"Give us this day our daily bread"**- grant us our daily provisions; spiritual and physical.

(v12) **“And forgive us our debts (trespasses)”** – We ask God to forgive our daily sins as we must also forsake those sins, **1 John 1:9-10** - *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

- **“as we forgive our debtors”** (those who sin against us), **Colossians 3:13** - *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

(v13) **“Lead us not into temptation”** does not mean that God tempts His children (**James 1:13-15** - *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*). In this petition we are asking God to guide us so that we will not get out of His will and get involved in a situation of temptation (1 John 5:18).

- **“deliver us from the evil one”** - The meaning here is, **“deliver us from Satan’s power, his snares, his deceptions, his temptations.”**

- **“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever”** – **Kingdom** is the **“right to rule.”** God has control over all things, and can order them as to answer our prayers.

Power is **“all authority”** - God has the power to accomplish what we ask. We are weak, but with God all things are possible!

Glory is **“all honor”** - Answered prayer reveals God’s goodness and unveils His glorious works!

For how long? **FOREVER!** – *That literally means FOREVER!*

> PREP #4 - PRAYER & FASTING IS POWERFUL (v14-18)

(v14) **The heart of “FORGIVENESS” revisited, why?** **Barnes** writes, “By this is meant, that when a man asks forgiveness, we are cordially and forever to pardon the offence; we are to declare our willingness to forgive him. If he does not ask forgiveness, yet we are still to treat him kindly; not to harbor malice, not to speak ill of him, to be ready to do him good, and be always prepared to declare him forgiven when he asks it, and if we are not ready and willing to forgive him; we are assured that God will not forgive us. Our Savior says we should forgive even if the offence be committed seventy times seven times (Matt 18:22).”

(v15) **What if you won’t forgive?** **John MacArthur** brings clarity to the passage; “This is not to suggest that God will withdraw justification from those who have already received the free pardon He extends to all believers. Forgiveness in that sense—a permanent and complete acquittal from the guilt and ultimate penalty of sin—belongs to all who are in Christ (cf. John 5:24; Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:7). Yet, Scripture also teaches that God chastens His children who disobey (Heb. 12:5–7). Believers are to confess their sins in order to obtain a day-to-day cleansing (1 John 1:9). This sort of forgiveness is a simple washing from the worldly defilements of sin; not a repeat of the wholesale cleansing from sin’s corruption that comes with justification. It is like a washing of the feet rather than a bath (cf. John 13:10). Forgiveness in this latter sense is what God threatens to withhold from Christians who refuse to forgive others (cf. 18:23–35).”

(v16-18) “Fasting” – Is going without food or drink voluntarily. Once again notice the word “*when*” you fast. Not “*if*” you fast. Fasting is personal, between you and God. It is not to be displayed for spiritual self-glory. Fasting is in the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament we find Anna at the Temple as she “*served God with fastings and prayers night and day*” (Luke 2:37). John the Baptist led his disciples to fast (Mark 2:18). Jesus fasted 40 days and 40 nights before His temptation (Matt 4:2). Cornelius was fasting at the time of his vision (Acts 10:30).

- The church in Antioch fasted (Acts 13:2) and sent Paul and Barnabas off on the first missionary journey with fasting and prayer (Acts 13:3). Paul and Barnabas prayed with fasting at the appointment of elders in the churches (Acts 14:23). Paul suggested that husbands and wives might abstain from intimacy to give themselves to fasting and prayer (1 Cor 7:5).

- Prayer and fasting also provides spiritual power according to Mark 9:29 -*So Jesus said to them, "This kind (demon) can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."* Fasting denies the flesh and yields to the Spirit. Prayer and fasting is a discipline that produces great power in the Kingdom of God!

> **Listen to Paul’s prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit**, *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.* (Phil 1:9-11)